

The Foolish and Wise Virgins.

A
SERMON

PREACHED AT

MOOR-FIELDS

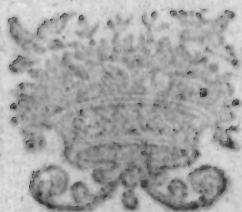
AND

Kennington-Common,

In the Year MDCCLXXIX.



GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.
Late of Pembroke College, Oxford.



L O N D O N :

Printed by W. STRAHAN for JAMES HUTTON,
at the Bible and Law, without Temple-Bar. 1740.

[Price Sixpence.]

MATTHEW XXV. 13.

*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the Day
nor the Hour, in which the Son of Man cometh.*

THE Apostle to the *Hebrews* informs us, that it is appointed for all Men once to die--after that, says he, comes Judgment.--And I think, if any Consideration be sufficient to awaken a sleeping drowsy World, it must be this---That there will be a Day, wherein these Heavens shall be wrapt up like a Scrawl; the Elements melt with fervent Heat; this Earth, and all the Things therein, be burnt up, and every Soul of every Nation summoned to appear before the dreadful Tribunal of the Righteous Judge of Quick and Dead, to receive Rewards or Punishments, according to the Deeds done in their Bodies.--The great Apostle of the *Gentiles*, when brought before *Felix*, could think of no better Means to convert that sinful Man, than to Reason of Temperance, Righteousness, and more especially of a Judgment to come.--The first might in some Measure affect, but I am perswaded, it was the last Consideration, I mean that of a Judgment to come, that made him tremble.--And so bad as the World is grown, yet there are few have their Consciences seared with a

red hot Iron, so as to deny that there will be a Reckoning hereafter.--The promiscuous Dispensations of Providence in this Life, wherein we see good Men afflicted, destitute, tormented, and the Wicked permitted triumphantly to ride over their Heads, has been always looked upon as an indisputable Argument, by the generality of Mankind, that there will be a Day in which God will judge the World in Righteousness, and administer true Judgment unto his People. Some indeed are so bold as to deny it, whilst they are engaged in the Pursuit of the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life,--but follow them to their Death-beds,--ask them, when their Souls are ready to launch into Eternity, what they then think of a Judgment to come, and they will tell you, they dare not give their Consciences the Lie any longer.--They feel a fearful Looking-for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation in their Hearts.——Since then these Things are so, Does it not highly concern each of us, my Brethren, before we come on a Bed of Sickness, seriously to examine how the Account stands between God and our Souls, and how it will fare with us in that Day.--As for the openly Prophane, the Drunkard, the Whoremonger, the Adulterer, and such like, there is no Doubt what will become of them,--without Repentance, they shall never enter into the Kingdom of God and his *Christ*.--No, their Damnation slumbereth not,--a burning fiery

fiery Tophet, kindled by the Fury of God's eternal Wrath, is prepared for their Reception, wherein they must suffer the Vengeance of an eternal Fire!--Nor is there the least Doubt of the State of true Believers.--For tho' they be despised and rejected of natural Men,--yet, being born again of God, and joint Heirs with *Christ*,--they have the Earnest of the promised Inheritance in their Hearts; they are assured, that a new and living Way is made open for them by the Blood of *Jesus Christ*, through which an abundant Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven shall be administered to them at the great Day of Accounts.---The only Question is, What will become of the Almost Christian? One that is content to go, as he thinks, in the easy, middle Way to Heaven,--without being prophane on the one Hand, or, as he now falsely imagines, righteous overmuch on the other. ---Multitudes there are in every Congregation, and consequently here present, of this Stamp.--And what is worst of all, it is easier to convince the most notorious Publicans and Sinners of their being out of a State of Salvation, than any of these Almost Christians.--And if *Jesus Christ* may be our Judge, they shall as certainly be rejected and disowned by him at the last Day, as tho' they lived in an open Defiance of all his Laws.

For what says our Lord in the Parable, (of which my Text is a Conclusion, and) which I intend to make the Subject of my present Discourse?

Discourse? *Then* (that is, at the Day of Judgment, which he had been discoursing of in the foregoing Chapter, and prosecutes in this) *shall the Kingdom of Heaven*, that is, the State of Christians in general, *be likened unto Ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.* In which Words there is a manifest Allusion to a Custom prevailing in our Lord's Time among the *Jews* at Marriage Solemnities, which being generally in the Night, it was customary for the Persons of the Bride-chamber to go out in Procession, with many Lights, to meet the Bridegroom.--By the Bridegroom here you are to understand *Jesus Christ*.--The Church, that is, true Believers, are his Spouse.--He is united to them by one Spirit, even in this Life; but the solemnizing of these sacred Nuptials is reserved till the Day of Judgment, when he shall come to take them Home to himself, and present them before Men and Angels, as his Purchase, to his Father, without Spot or Wrinkle, or any such Thing.--By the Ten Virgins we are to understand the Professors of Christianity in general. All are called Virgins, because all are called to be Saints.--All who name the Name of *Christ* are obliged by that very Profession to depart from all Iniquity.--The pure and chaste in Heart are the only Persons that will be so blessed as to see God.--As *Christ* was born of a Virgin's Womb, so *Christ* can dwell in none but Virgin Souls,--Souls made pure and

and holy by the In-dwelling of his Holy Spirit.
 --But what says the Apostle? *All are not Israelites that are of Israel.*--All are not true Christians that are called after the Name of Christ.--*Five of these Virgins were wise*, that is, true Believers, *and Five were foolish*, that is, formal Hypocrites, whited Sepulchres, mere outside Professors.--But why are Five said to be wise, and the other Five foolish?--Hear what our Lord says in the following Verses.--*They that were foolish took their Lamps, and took no Oil with them; but the wise took Oil in their Vessels with their Lamps.*--*They that were foolish took their Lamps*, that is, the Lamps of an outward Profession; they would go to Church, say over several Manuals of Prayers, come perhaps even into a Field to hear a Sermon, give at Collections, and receive the Sacrament constantly, nay oftner than once a Month.--But then here lay the Mistake; they had no *Oil* in their Lamps,--no Principle of Grace,--no living Faith in their Hearts;--without which, tho' we should give all our Goods to feed the Poor, and our Bodies to be burned, it would profit us nothing.——In short, they were exact, nay perhaps superstitiously bigotted to the Form, but all the while they were Strangers to, and in Effect denied the Power of Godliness in their Hearts.--They would go to Church, but at the same Time think it no Harm to go to a Ball, or an Assembly, notwithstanding they promised at
 their

their Baptism to renounce the Poms and Vanities of this wicked World.--They were so exceeding fearful of being Righteous overmuch, that they would even persecute those that were truly devout, if they attempted to go a Step further than themselves.——In one Word, they never effectually felt the Powers of the World to come,--they thought they might be Christians without any Thing of inward Feelings, and therefore, notwithstanding their high Pretensions, they had only a Name to live.

And now, Sirs, let me pause a while, and in the Name of that God whom I endeavour to serve in the Gospel of his dear Son, give me Leave to ask you one Question. Whilst I have been drawing, tho' in Miniature, the Character of those foolish Virgins, have not many of your Consciences made the Application, and with a small, still, tho' articulate Voice, said, Thou Man, thou Woman art one of these foolish Virgins, for thy Sentiments and Practice agreeth thereto? Do not then stifle, but encourage these Convictions,--and who knows but that the Lord, who is rich in Mercy to all that call upon him faithfully, may so work upon you, even by this Foolishness of Preaching, as to make you wise Virgins before you return Home?

What they were you shall know immediately.--*But the Wise*, says our Lord, Verse 4. *took Oil in their Vessels with their Lamps.*---
Observe,

Observe, *the wise*, that is, the true Believers, had their Lamps as well as the foolish Virgins--For Christianity does not require us to cast off outward Forms,--we may use Forms, and yet not be formal.--For Instance, it is possible to worship God in a set Form of Prayer, and yet worship him in Spirit and in Truth,--and therefore, Brethren, let us not judge one another.--The wise Virgins had their Lamps.---Herein then did not lie the Difference between them, that the one worshipped with a Form, and the other did not:--No, as the Pharisee and Publican went up to the Temple to pray, so these wise and foolish Virgins might go to the same Place of Worship, and sit under the same Minister;--but then the Wise took Oil in their Vessels with their Lamps. They kept up the Form, but did not rest in it.--Their Words in Prayer were the Language of their Hearts,--and they were no Strangers to inward Feelings;--they had savingly tasted the good Word of Life, and felt, or had an experimental Knowledge of the Powers of the World to come;---they were not afraid of searching Doctrine, nor affronted when Ministers told them they by Nature deserved to be damned;--they were not self-righteous, but willing that *Jesus Christ* should have all the Glory of their Salvation;--they were convinced that the Merits of *Jesus Christ* were to be apprehended only by Faith, but yet were they as careful to maintain good Works, as tho' they were to

be justified by them.--In short, their Obedience flowed from Love and Gratitude, and was cheerful, constant, uniform, and universal, like unto that Obedience which the holy Angels pay our Father in Heaven.

Here then let me exhort you to pause again; and if any of you can faithfully apply these Characters to your Hearts, give God the Glory, and take the Comfort to your own Souls. You are not false, but true Believers.--*Jesus Christ* has been made of God to you Wisdom, even that Wisdom whereby you shall be made wise unto Salvation. God sees a Difference between you and foolish Virgins, if Natural Men will not.--You need not therefore be uneasy, if a like State of Misery and Mortality happen to you both. I say, a like State of Misery and Mortality; for, Verse 5. *while the Bridegroom tarried*, that is, in the Space of Time which passeth between our Lord's Ascension, and his coming again to Judgment, *they all slumbered and slept*.--The wise as well as foolish died, for Dust we all are, and to Dust we must return.--It is no Reflection at all upon the Divine Goodness, that Believers, as well as Hypocrites, must pass thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for *Christ* has taken away the Sting out of it, so that we need fear no Evil.--It is to them a Passage to everlasting Life.--Death is only terrible to those that have no Hope, because they live without Faith, and therefore without God in the World.--Whosoever there
are

are amongst you that have received the First Fruits of the Spirit, I am persuaded you are ready to cry out with holy *Job*, *We would not live here always; we long to be dissolved, that we may be with Jesus Christ; and tho' Worms will destroy our Bodies as well as others, yet we are content, being assured that our Redeemer liveth, that he will stand at the latter Days upon the Earth, and that in our Flesh we shall see God.*--But it is not so with Hypocrites and Unbelievers beyond the Grave: For what says our Lord?

And at Midnight---observe, at Midnight, when all was hush'd and quiet, and no one dreaming of any such Thing,---*a Cry was made,--the Voice of the Archangel, and the Trump of God was heard, sounding this general Alarm to Things in Heaven, to Things in Earth, and to Things in the Waters under the Earth.*---*Behold,*---mark how this awful Summons is usher'd in with the Word *Behold*, to engage our Attention---*Behold the Bridegroom*, even *Jesus Christ*, the Desire of Nations,---the Bridegroom of his Spouse the Church.---*Because he tarried for a while, to exercise the Faith of Saints, and give Sinners Space to repent, Scoffers were apt to cry out, Where is the Promise of his coming?*--But he is not slack concerning his Promise, as these Men account Slackness,--for, *behold, he that was to come is now come, and will not tarry any longer. He cometh to be glorified with his Saints, and*

be justified by them.--In short, their Obedience flowed from Love and Gratitude, and was cheerful, constant, uniform, and universal, like unto that Obedience which the holy Angels pay our Father in Heaven.

Here then let me exhort you to pause again; and if any of you can faithfully apply these Characters to your Hearts, give God the Glory, and take the Comfort to your own Souls. You are not false, but true Believers.--*Jesus Christ* has been made of God to you Wisdom, even that Wisdom whereby you shall be made wise unto Salvation. God sees a Difference between you and foolish Virgins, if Natural Men will not.--You need not therefore be uneasy, if a like State of Misery and Mortality happen to you both. I say, a like State of Misery and Mortality; for, Verse 5. *while the Bridegroom tarried*, that is, in the Space of Time which passeth between our Lord's Ascension, and his coming again to Judgment, *they all slumbered and slept*.--The wise as well as foolish died, for Dust we all are, and to Dust we must return.--It is no Reflection at all upon the Divine Goodness, that Believers, as well as Hypocrites, must pass thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for *Christ* has taken away the Sting out of it, so that we need fear no Evil.--It is to them a Passage to everlasting Life.--Death is only terrible to those that have no Hope, because they live without Faith, and therefore without God in the World.--Whosoever there
are

are amongst you that have received the First Fruits of the Spirit, I am persuaded you are ready to cry out with holy Job, *We would not live here always; we long to be dissolved, that we may be with Jesus Christ; and tho' Worms will destroy our Bodies as well as others, yet we are content, being assured that our Redeemer liveth, that he will stand at the latter Days upon the Earth, and that in our Flesh we shall see God.*--But it is not so with Hypocrites and Unbelievers beyond the Grave: For what says our Lord?

And at Midnight---observe, at Midnight, when all was hush'd and quiet, and no one dreaming of any such Thing,---*a Cry was made*,--the Voice of the Archangel, and the Trump of God was heard, sounding this general Alarm to Things in Heaven, to Things in Earth, and to Things in the Waters under the Earth.---*Behold*,---mark how this awful Summons is usher'd in with the Word *Behold*, to engage our Attention---*Behold the Bridegroom*, even Jesus Christ, the Desire of Nations,---the Bridegroom of his Spouse the Church.---¹Because he tarried for a while, to exercise the Faith of Saints, and give Sinners Space to repent, Scoffers were apt to cry out, *Where is the Promise of his coming?*--But he is not slack concerning his Promise, as these Men account Slackness,--for, *behold, he that was to come is now come, and will not tarry any longer. He cometh to be glorified with his Saints, and*

to take Vengeance on them that know not God, and have not obeyed his Gospel.---He cometh, not as a poor despised *Galilean*;--not to be stabled in a stinking Manger;--not to be despised and rejected of Men;--not to be blindfolded, spit upon, and buffeted;--not to be nailed to an accursed Tree;--not as the Son of Man, but as he really was, the Eternal Son of God; *He cometh riding on the Wings of the Wind, in the Glory of the Father and his holy Angels, and to be had in everlasting Reverence of all that shall be round about him.* Go ye forth to meet him. *Arise ye Dead, ye foolish as well as wise Virgins, arise, and come to Judgment.*--Multitudes, no doubt, that hear this awakening Cry, would rejoice if *the Rocks might fall on them, and the Hills cover them from the Presence of the Lamb.* What would they give, if, as they lived like Beasts, they might now die like them that perish? How would they rejoice, if those same Excuses, which they had made on this side Eternity for attending on holy Ordinances, would now keep them from appearing before the Heavenly Bridegroom? But as *Adam*, notwithstanding his Fig Leaves, and the Trees of the Garden, could not hide himself from God, when arrested with an *Adam, where art thou?* So now the Decree is gone forth, and the Trump of God has given its last Sound, all Tongues, People, Nations, and Languages, both wise and foolish Virgins, must come into his Presence, and bow beneath his

his Footstool. --- Even *Pontius Pilate, Annas,* and *Caiphas*; even the proud persecuting High-Priests and Pharisees of this Generation must now appear before him.

For says our Lord, *Then*, that is, when *the Cry was made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh*; in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye, the Graves were opened, the Sea gave up its Dead, and *all those Virgins*, both wise and foolish, *arose and trimmed their Lamps*, that is, endeavoured to put themselves in a Posture to meet the Bridegroom.

But how may we imagine the foolish Virgins were surprized, when, notwithstanding their high Thoughts, and proud Imaginations of their Security, they now find themselves wholly naked, and void of that inward Holiness and Purity of Heart, without which no Man living, at that Day, shall comfortably meet the Lord. I doubt not but many of these foolish Virgins, whilst in this World, were *cloathed in Purple and fine Linen, fared sumptuously every Day*, and would disdain to set many of the wise Virgins, some of which might be as poor as *Lazarus*, even with the Dogs of their Flock. Those were looked upon by them as Enthusiasts and Mad-men, as Persons that were Righteous over-much, and who intended to turn the World upside down;-- But now Death hath opened their Eyes, and convinced them to their eternal Sorrow, that he is not a true Christian who is only one outwardly.--

wardly.--Now they find, tho' alas too late, that they, and not the wise Virgins, had been *besides themselves*.--Now their proud Hearts are made to stoop, their lofty Looks are brought low; and as *Dives* entreated that *Lazarus* might dip the Tip of his Finger in Water, and be sent to cool his Tongue, so these foolish Virgins, these formal Hypocrites, are obliged to turn Beggars to those whom they once despised.--*Give us of your Oil.* -- Oh impart to us a little of that Grace and Holy Spirit, for your insisting on which we Fools accounted your Lives Madness,--*for*, alas! *our Lamps are gone out*;--we had only the Form of Godliness; we were whited Sepulchres;--we were Heart-Hypocrites; we contented ourselves with desiring to be good; and tho' confident of Salvation whilst we lived, yet our Hope is entirely gone now; God has taken away our Souls.--Give us, therefore, Oh give us, tho' we once despised you, *Give us of your Oil, for our Lamps of an outward Profession are quite gone out.*

Comfort ye, comfort ye, my People, saith the Lord, with this.--My Brethren in *Christ*, hear what the foolish say to the wise Virgins, and learn in Patience to possess your Souls.--If you are true Followers of the lowly *Jesus*, I am perswaded you have your Names cast out, and all manner of Evil spoken against you falsely for his Name's sake.--For no one ever did, or will live Godly in *Christ Jesus*, without suffering

ing Persecution; nay, I doubt not but your chief Foes are those of your own Households. Tell me, do not your carnal Relations and Friends vex your tender Souls Day by Day, in bidding you spare yourselves, and take heed lest you go too far? And as you pass'd along to come and hear the Word of God, have you not heard many a Pharisee cry out, Here comes another Troop of his Followers? Brethren, be not surprized,--*Christ's Servants were always the World's Fools.--You know it hated him before it hated you.--Rejoice, and be exceeding glad,--- Yet a little while, and behold the Bridegroom cometh,* and then shall you hear these formal, scoffing Pharisees saying unto you, *Give us of your Oil, for our Lamps are gone out.*--When you are reviled, revile not again; when you suffer, threaten not; but commit your Souls into the Hands of him that judgeth righteously;--- for behold the Day cometh, when the Children of God shall speak for themselves.

The wise Virgins in the Parable, no doubt, endured the same cruel Mockings as you may do; but as the Lamb before the Shearer is dumb, so in this Life open'd they not their Mouths: But now we find they can give their Enemies an Answer;--*Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*—These Words are not to be understood as tho' they were spoken in an insulting Manner,--for true
Charity

Charity teaches us to use the worst of Sinners, and our most bitter Enemies, with the Meekness and Gentleness of *Christ*.--Though *Dives* was in Hell, yet *Abraham* does not say, Thou Villain, but only, *Son, remember*.-- And I am persuaded, had it been in the Power of these wise Virgins, they would have dealt with the foolish Virgins, (as God knows I would willingly deal with my most inveterate Enemies) not only give them of their Oil, but also exalt them to the Right Hand of God.--It was not then for want of Love, but for Fear of wanting a Sufficiency for themselves, that made them return this Answer,-- *Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you*.-- For they that have most Grace have none to spare. None but self-righteous foolish Virgins think they are good enough.--Those who are truly wise, are always most distrustful of themselves, pressing forwards to the Things that are before, and think it well, if after they have done all, being yet but unprofitable Servants, they can make their Calling and Election sure.-- *Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you;-- but go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves*.--These Words, indeed, seem to be spoken with a kind of Triumph, tho' certainly in the most compassionate Manner; *Go ye to them that sell, and buy for yourselves*. Unhappy Virgins! You accounted our Lives Folly, whilst with you in the Body.--How often have you condemned us for our Zeal in running

ning to hear the Word, and look'd upon us as Enthusiasts for talking about, and affirming that we must be led by the Spirit, and walk by the Spirit, and hear the Spirit of God witnessing with our Spirits that we are his Children? But now you would be glad to be Partakers of this Privilege; -- but it is not ours to give; ---you have been sleeping, when you should have been striving to enter in at the strait Gate, --and now *go to them that sell*, (if you can) *and buy for yourselves*.

And what say you to this, ye foolish formal Professors? (for I doubt not but Curiosity, and the Desire of Novelty, hath brought many such to this despised Place, to hear a Sermon.) Can you hear this Reply to the foolish Virgins, and yet not tremble? Why, yet a little while, and thus it shall be said to you:--Rejoice, and bolster yourselves up in your Duties and Forms; endeavour to cover your Nakedness with the Fig-Leaves of an outward Profession, and a legal Righteousness, and despise the true Servants of *Christ* as much as you please, --yet know, that all your Hopes will fail you, when God brings you into Judgment. For not him who commends himself is justified, but whom the Lord commendeth.

But to return. -- We do not hear any Reply the foolish Virgins make; no, their Consciences condemned them; they are struck dumb, and are now filled with anxious Thoughts how
C they

they shall buy Oil, that they may lift up their Heads before the Bridegroom.

But whilst they go to buy; that is, whilst they are thinking what they shall do,—the Bridegroom, the Lord *Jesus*, the Head, the King, the Husband of his Spouse the Church, cometh, attended with Thousands, and Twenty Times Ten Thousands of Saints and Angels, publickly to count up his Jewels;—and they that are ready,—the wise Virgins, who have Oil in their Lamps, and are sealed by his Spirit to the Day of Redemption, these having on the Wedding Garment of his Righteousness, the Covering of his Holy Spirit, go in with him to the Marriage.—But who can express the Transports that these wise Virgins feel while they are thus admitted in a holy Triumph into the Presence and full Enjoyment of him whom their Souls hungred and thirsted after. No doubt, they had tasted of his Love, and, by Faith, had often fed on him in their Hearts, when sitting down to commemorate his last Supper here on Earth: But how full may we think their Hearts and Tongues are of his Praises, now they are sitting down together, to eat Bread in his Heavenly Kingdom? And what is still an Addition to their Happiness, the Door is now shut, that so they may enjoy the ever blessed God, and the Company of Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, without Interruption.—I say, without Interruption;

terruption; for in this Life their Eyes often gushed out with Water, because Men kept not God's Law, and they could never come to appear before the Lord, or to hear his Word, but *Satan*, and his Servants and Children, would come also, to disturb them.--But now the Door is shut.--Now there is a perfect Communion of Saints, which they in vain longed for in this lower World.--Now Tares no longer grow up with the Wheat.--Not one single Hypocrite, or Unbeliever, can screen himself amongst them.--Now *the Wicked cease from troubling*, now their weary Souls enjoy an everlasting Rest.

Once more, O Believers, let me exhort you in Patience to possess your Souls. God, if he has freely justified you by Faith in his Son, and given you his Spirit, has sealed you to be *his*, and has secured you as surely as he secured *Noah*, when he lock'd him in the Ark.—— For a little while, 'tis true,—tho' Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with *Christ*, and neither Men or Devils can pluck you out of your Heavenly Father's Hands, yet you must be tossed about with manifold Temptations.— But lift up your Heads, the Day of your perfect and compleat Redemption draweth nigh. Behold the Bridegroom cometh to take you to himself; the Door shall be shut, and you shall be for ever with the Lord.

But I even tremble to tell you, O nominal Christians! that the Door will be shut:—I

mean the Door of Mercy, never to be open'd to give you Admission, tho' you should continue knocking to all Eternity. For thus speaks our Lord, Verse 11. *Afterwards*, that is, after those that were ready had went in, and the Door was shut.—After these foolish Virgins had, to their Sorrow, found that no Oil was to be bought, no Grace to be procured, *came also the other Virgins*,—and as *Esau*, after *Jacob* had got the Blessing, cried with an exceeding bitter Cry, *Bless me, even me also, O my Father*, so they come saying, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*.

Observe the Importunity of these foolish Virgins, implied in these Words, *Lord, Lord*.—Whilst in the Body, I suppose they only read, but did not pray over their Prayers. If you would tell them they should pray without ceasing, they should pray with their Hearts, and feel the Want of what they prayed for, they would answer, they could not tell what you meant by inward Feelings; that God did not require us to be always on our Knees; but if a Man did justly, and loved Mercy, and did as the Church Forms required him, it was as much as the Lord required at his Hands.

I fear, Sirs, too many amongst us are of this Mind; nay, I fear there are many so profanely polite, and void of the Love of God, as to think it too great a Piece of Self-Denial, to rise early to offer up a Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving acceptable to God thro' *Jesus Christ*.—

Christ.—If any such, by the good Providence of God, are brought hither this Morning, I beseech you consider your Ways, and remember, if you are not awaken'd out of your spiritual Lethargy, and live a Life of Prayer here, you shall in vain cry out with the foolish Virgins, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, hereafter!

Observe further, the Impudence, as well as Importunity of these other Virgins.—*Lord, Lord*, say they,—as tho' they were intimately acquainted with the Holy *Jesus*.—Like Numbers amongst us, who because they go to Church, repeat their Creeds, and perhaps receive the Sacrament, think they have a Right to call *Jesus* their Saviour, and dare call God their Father, when they put up the Lord's Prayer. But *Jesus* is not your Saviour; the Devil, not God, is your Father, unless your Hearts are purified by Faith, and you are born again from above.—'Tis not the being baptised by Water only, but by the Holy Ghost also, that must purify and perfect your fallen Nature. And it will do you no Service at the Great Day, to say unto *Christ*, Lord, my Name is in the Register of such or such a Parish, unless the Laws and Image of *Christ* are written and stamp'd upon your Hearts.—I am perswaded the foolish Virgins could say this, and more.—But what Answer did the Blessed *Jesus* make? He answered and said, Verse 12. *Verily I say unto you*,—He puts the Word *Verily*, to assure them he was in Earnest,—
I say

I say unto you, I am Truth itself,—I whom you have owned in Words, but in Works denied,—Verily I say unto you, I know you not.—These Words must not be understood literally; for whatever *Arians* and *Socinians* may vainly say to the contrary, yet we affirm, that *Jesus Christ* is God, God blessed for ever, and therefore knoweth all Things.—He saw *Nathaniel*, when under the Fig-Tree. He sees, and is now looking down from Heaven, his Dwelling-Place, upon us, to see how we behave in these Fields.—Brethren, I know nothing of the Thoughts and Intents of your Hearts in coming hither, but *Jesus Christ* does.—He knows who come like new-born Babes, desirous to be fed with the sincere Milk of the Word.—And he knows who come to hear what the Babler says, and to run away with Part of a broken Sentence, that they may have whereof they may ridicule, or accuse him.—This Expression then, *I know you not*, must not be understood literally:—No, it only denies a Knowledge of Approbation; as tho' *Christ* had said,—*You call me Lord, Lord, but you have not done the Things that I have said*:—You desire me to open the Door, but how can you come in hither, not having on a Wedding Garment? Alas! you are naked as you came into the World.—Where is my outward Righteousness imputed to you? Where is my inherent Righteousness wrought in you? Where is my Divine Image stamped upon your Souls? How dare

dare you call me Lord, Lord, when you have not received the Holy Ghost, whereby I seal all that are truly mine? *Verily I know you not,—Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

And now, *he that hath Ears to hear, let him bear* what manner of Persons these were, whom *Jesus Christ* dismissed with this Answer.

Remember, I intreat you remember, they are not sent away for being Fornicators, Swearers, Sabbath-breakers, or Prodigals,—no, in all Probability, as I observed before, they were, touching the outward Observances of the Moral Law, blameless.—They were zealous Maintainers of the Form of Religion: And if they did no Good, yet no one could say they did any one any Harm.—That for which they were condemned, and eternally banished from the Presence of the Lord, (for so much is implied in that Sentence—*I know you not*) was this, they had no Oil in their Lamps, —no Principle of Eternal Life, or true and living Faith and Love of God in their Hearts. But alas! If Persons may go to Church, receive the Sacrament, lead honest moral Lives, and yet be sent to Hell at the last Day, as they certainly will be, if they advance no further; Where wilt thou, O Drunkard? Where wilt thou, O Swearer? Where wilt thou, O Sabbath-breaker? Where wilt thou that deniest Divine Revelation, and even the Form of Godliness?

liness? Where wilt thou and such like Sinners appear?

—I know very well where you must appear, even before the dreadful Tribunal of *Jesus Christ*.—For however you may, like *Felix*, continually put off your Convictions, yet you, as well as others, must arise after Death, and appear in Judgment.—You will then find, to your eternal Sorrow, what I just hinted at in the Beginning of this Discourse, *viz.* that your Damnation slumbereth not.—Sin has blinded your Hearts, and harden'd your Foreheads now.—But yet a little while, and our Lord will avenge him of his Adversaries.—Already, by Faith, I see the Heavens opened, and the Holy *Jesus* coming with his Face brighter than Ten Thousand Suns, and darting Fury upon you from his Eyes. I see you rising from your Graves, trembling and astonished, and crying out, Who can abide this Day of his Coming? —And now what Inference shall I draw from what has been delivered? Our Lord, in the Words of the Text, hath drawn one for me. *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the Day nor the Hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.*

Watch, that is, be upon your Guard,—and keep your Graces in continual Exercise. For as when we are commanded to Watch unto Prayer, it signifies that we should continue instant in that Duty; so when we are required to Watch in general, it means, that we should

put

Put on the whole Armour of God, and live every Day, as tho' it was our last.

And Oh that the Lord may now enable me to lift up my Voice like a Trumpet! For had I a Thousand Tongues, or could I speak so loud that the whole World might hear me, I could not sound a more useful Alarm than that which is contained in the Words of the Text. *Watch therefore*, my Brethren, I beseech you by the Mercies of God in *Christ Jesus, Watch*, be upon your Guard.—*Awake, ye that sleep in the Dust; for ye know not the Day, nor the Hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh.*—Perhaps to Day, perhaps this next Midnight, the Cry may be made. For in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye, the Trump is to sound.—However, supposing the Final Day of Judgment to all may be yet a great Way off; yet to us it is certainly near at Hand.—For what is our Life? it is but a Vapour, it is but a Span long, so soon passeth it away, and we are gone.—Blessed be God, we are all here well.—But who, out of this great Multitude, dare say, I shall go Home to my House in Safety? Who knows, but whilst I am speaking, God may commission his Ministering Spirits immediately to call some of you off by a sudden Stroke, to give an Account with what Attention, and to what Intent, you have heard this Sermon? And it is chiefly for this Reason, that God has hid the Day of our Death

D

from

from us. For since I know not but I may die To-morrow, Why, O my Soul, (may each of us say) wilt thou not watch to Day? Since I know not but I may die the next Moment, why wilt thou not prepare for dying this?

You know, my Brethren, some such Instances have lately been given us.—And what Angel or Spirit hath assured us, that some of you shall not be the next? *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the Day nor the Hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.*

Many such Reflections as these, my Brethren, crowd in upon my Mind. At present, blessed be the Lord, who delights to magnify his Strength in a poor Worm's Weakness, I am at a Stand, not so much about what I shall say, as what I shall leave unsaid.—My Belly, like *Elihu's*, is as it were, full of new Wine; out of the Abundance of my Heart my Mouth speaketh.—The seeing so great a Multitude standing before me; a Sense of the infinite Majesty of that God in whose Name I preach, and before whom I, as well as you, must appear to give an Account, and the Uncertainty there is whether I shall live another Day to speak to you any more.—These Considerations, I say, especially the Presence of God, which I now feel in my Soul, furnish me with so much Matter, that I scarce know how to begin, and where to end my Application. However,
by

by the Divine Assistance, I will address myself more particularly to three Sorts of Persons.

And first I would remind you that are notoriously ungodly in the Land, of what our Lord says in the Text.—For, tho' I have said, that your Damnation slumbereth not, whilst you continue in an impenitent State,—yet that was only to set you upon your Watch, to convince you of your Danger, and excite you to cry out, *What shall we do to be saved?* I appeal to all that hear me, whether I have said, the Door of Mercy should be shut against you, if you believe in *Jesus Christ*? No, if you are the chief of Sinners; if you are the Murderers of Fathers, and Murderers of Mothers; if you are the Dung and Off-scouring of all Things; yet, if you believe on *Jesus Christ*, and continue to cry unto him with the Faith of the penitent Thief, *Lord remember us now thou art in thy Kingdom*, I will pawn my eternal Salvation upon it, if he does not shortly translate you to his Heavenly Paradise.--Wonder not at my speaking with so much Assurance, for I know *this is a faithful and true Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save all believing Sinners*; nay, so great is his Love, that I am perswaded, was it necessary, he would come again into the World, and die a second Time for them on the Cross.—But, blessed be God, when our Lord bowed down

his Head, and gave up the Ghost, our Redemption was finished. It is not our Sins, but our want of a lively Faith in his Blood, that will prove our Condemnation.—If you draw near to him now by Faith, tho' you are the worst of Sinners, yet he will not say unto you, *Verily, I know you not*. No, a Door of Mercy shall be opened to you.—Look then, look by an Eye of Faith to that God-Man whom you have pierced.—Behold him bleeding, panting, dying upon the Cross, with Arms stretched out, ready to embrace you all!—Hark! how he groans! See how all Nature is an Agony! the Rocks rend, the Graves open, the Sun withdraws its Light, ashamed as it were to see the Saviour suffer!—and all this to proclaim Man's great Redemption! Nay, the Holy *Jesus*, in the most bitter Agonies and Pangs of Death, prays for his very Murderers, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*.—What then, if you have crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open Shame, yet do not despair, only believe, and even this shall be forgiven you.—You have read, at least you have heard no doubt, how three Thousand were converted at St. *Peter's* preaching one single Sermon after our Lord's Ascension into Heaven,—and many of the Crucifiers of the Lord of Glory undoubtedly were amongst them,—And why should you despair? For *Jesus Christ*

Christ is the same Yesterday, to Day, and for ever.—The Holy Ghost shall be sent down on you as well as on them, if you do but believe.—For *Christ* ascended up on high to receive this Gift, even for the vilest of Men, for his greatest Enemies.—Come then, all ye that are weary and heavy laden with a Sense of your Sins, lay hold on *Christ* by Faith, and he shall give you rest.—For Salvation is the free Gift of God to all them that believe.—And tho' you may think this too good News to be true,—yet I speak the Truth in *Christ*, I lie not, this is the Gospel, this is the Glad Tidings which we are commission'd to preach to every Creature.—*Be not faithless then, but believing.*—Let not the Devil lead you captive at his Will any longer: For all the Wages he gives his Servants is Death.—Death often in this Life; Death always, everlasting Death in the next. But now the free Gift of God is Eternal Life to all that believe in *Jesus Christ*.—Pharisees are, and will be offended at my coming here, and offering you Salvation on such cheap Terms.---But the more they bid me hold my Peace, the more will I cry out, and proclaim to Sinners, that *Jesus* the Son of *David* as he was Man, but *David's* Lord as he was God, *will have Mercy upon all that by a living Faith truly turn to him.*---If to preach this, is to be vile, I pray God I may be more vile.---If they will not let me preach *Christ* crucified,

crucified, and offer Salvation to poor Sinners in a Church, I will preach him in the Lanes, Streets, Highways and Hedges ;--and nothing pleases me better than to think I am now in one of the Devil's strongest Holds.---Surely the Lord has not sent me and all you here hither for nothing ; no, blessed be God, *the Fields are white ready unto Harvest*, and many Souls, I hope, will be gathered into his Heavenly Garner.--'Tis true, 'tis the Midnight of the Church, especially the poor Church of *England*, but God has lately sent forth his Servants to cry, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh*.--I beseech you, O Sinners, hearken unto the Voice ; let me espouse you now by Faith to my dear Master, and henceforward watch and pray, that you may be ready to go forth to meet him.

Secondly, I would apply myself to those amongst you that are not openly profane, but by depending on a formal Round of Duties, deceive your own Souls, and are still as the foolish Virgins.

But I must speak to your Conviction before I can speak to your Comfort.—My Brethren, do not deceive your own Souls.---You have heard how far the foolish Virgins went, and yet were answered with a *Verily I know you not*.--The Reason is, because none but such as have a living Faith in *Jesus Christ*, and are truly born again from above, can possibly enter
into

into the Kingdom of Heaven.---You may, perhaps, live honestly, and outwardly moral Lives; but if you depend on that Morality, or join your Works with your Faith, in order to justify you before God, you have no Lot or Share in *Christ's* Redemption.---For what is this but to deny the Lord that has bought you? What is this but making yourselves your own Saviours, taking the Crown from *Jesus Christ*, and putting it on your own Heads? The Crime of the Devil, some have supposed, consisted in this, that he would not bow to the Name of *Jesus*, when he came into the World as Man, when the Father commanded all the Angels to worship him.--And what do you less? You will not own and submit to his Righteousness.--And tho' you pretend to worship him with your Lips, yet your Hearts are far from him: Besides, you, in Effect, deny the Operations of his Blessed Spirit; you mistake common for effectual Grace. You hope to be saved, because you have good Desires.--What is this, but to give God, his Word, and all his Saints the Lye? A *Jew*, a *Turk*, has equally as good Grounds whereon to build his Hopes of Salvation: Great Need therefore have I to cry out to you, O foolish Virgins, watch; beg of God to convince you of your Self-Righteousness, and the secret Unbelief of your Hearts, or otherwise, whensoever the Cry shall be made, *Behold the Bridegroom*

groom cometh, you will find yourselves utterly unprepared to go forth to meet him.---You may cry, *Lord, Lord*, but the Answer will be, *Verily I know you not!*

Thirdly, I would speak a Word or two, by way of Exhortation, to those who are wise Virgins, and are well assured that they have on a Wedding Garment.

That there are many such amongst you, who by Grace have renounced your own Righteousness, and know assuredly that the Righteousness of the Lord *Jesus* is imputed to you, I make no Doubt. God has his secret Ones in the worst of Times; and I am perswaded he has not let so loud a Gospel Cry be made amongst his People for nothing.--No, I am confident the Holy Ghost has been given to some, on the preaching of Faith; nay, has powerfully fallen upon many, whilst they have been hearing the Word.---You are now then no longer foolish, but wise Virgins; notwithstanding I beseech you also, suffer the Word of Exhortation,--for wise Virgins are too apt, whilst the Bridegroom tarries, to slumber and sleep; watch therefore, my dear Brethren, watch and pray, at this Time especially: For, perhaps a Time of Suffering is at Hand.--The Ark of the Lord begins already to be driven into the Wilderness.--Be ye therefore upon the Watch, and still persevere in following your Lord even without the Camp, bearing

bearing his Reproach.--The Cry that has been lately made, has awaken'd the Devil and his Servants;---they begin to rage horribly, and well they may,---for I hope their Kingdom is in Danger. Watch therefore, my Brethren; for if we are not always upon our Guard, a Time of Trial may overtake us unawares, and instead of owning, like *Peter*, we may be tempted to deny our Master.--Set Death and Eternity often before you.---Look unto *Jesus*, the Author and Finisher of your Faith, and consider how little a while it will be e'er he comes to Judgment, and then our Reproach shall be wiped away;--the Accusers of us and our Brethren shall be cast down, and the Door being shut, we all shall continue for ever in Heaven with our dear Lord *Jesus*. *Amen!* and *Amen!*

Lastly, What I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch*.---High and Low, Rich and Poor, Young and Old, one with another, of whatever Sect or Denomination, for I regard not that; I beseech you, by the Mercies of that *Jesus* whom I am now preaching, be upon your Guard.---Fly, fly to *Jesus Christ*, that Heavenly Bridegroom, behold he desires to take you to himself:--Miserable, poor, blind and naked, as you are, yet he is willing to cloath you with his everlasting Righteousness, and make you Partakers of that Glory which he enjoy'd with the Father before the World

E

was.--

was,--Oh do not turn a deaf Ear to me; do not reject the Message on Account of the Meanness of the Messenger! ---I am a Child, a Youth of uncircumcised Lips, but the Lord has chosen me, that the Glory might be all his own.---Had he sent to invite you by a learned Rabbi, you might have been tempted to think the Man had done something.--- But now God has sent a Child that cannot speak, that the Excellency of the Power may be seen to be not of Man, but of God.---Let Letter-learned Pharisees then despise my Youth:--I care not how vile I appear in the Sight of such Men, I glory in it; and I am persuaded, if any of you should be set upon your Watch by this Preaching, you will have no Reason to repent that God sent a Child to cry, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh!* Oh! my Brethren, the Thought of being instrumental in bringing some of you to Glory, fills me with fresh Zeal:---Once more, therefore, I entreat you, *Watch, Watch and Pray*; for the Lord *Jesus* will receive all that call upon him, yea, all such as call upon him *faithfully*.---Let that Cry, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh*, be continually sounding in your Ears; and begin now to live, as tho' you were assured this was the Night in which you were to be summoned to go forth to meet him. I could say more, but the other Business and Duties of the Day oblige me to stop.--May the Lord
give

give you all an hearing Ear, and an obedient Heart, and so closely unite you to himself by one Spirit, that when he shall come in terrible Majesty to judge Mankind, you may be found having on a Wedding Garment, and ready to go in with him to the Marriage.

*Grant this, O Father, for thy dear Son's
sake, Christ Jesus our Lord,---Amen!
and Amen!*

F I N I S.

Give you all an hearing Ear, and an obedient
Heart, and so closely unite you to himself by
one Spirit, that when he shall come in ter-
rible Majesty to judge Mankind, you may be
found having on a Wedding Garment, and
ready to go in with him to the Marriage.

Grant this, O Father, for thy dear Son's
sake, Christ Jesus our Lord---Amen!
and Amen!

F. 22. 11. 9. 2.
